



Ucare

## **The Caregiver Guide**

### **Module 12**

## **Assistive Technology**

### **Participant Booklet**

# Module 12

## Assistive Technology

### PURPOSE

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The purpose of this booklet is to help caregivers understand assistive technology (AT) and how it can help their family member with daily living activities. The module discusses how to locate AT and how to obtain financial support for purchasing it.

### WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

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**After completing this module you will be able to:**

1. Identify different types of AT devices.
2. Describe how AT can help your family member with tasks of daily living to encourage their independence.
3. Determine what types of AT will be most useful.
4. Describe where and how to get AT devices.
5. Identify how to obtain financial support for AT.

### DEFINITION OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

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An AT device is any item or piece of equipment that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities. AT is used to improve quality of life and increase independence.

### TYPES OF AT

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- Low-Technology
- High-Technology

## LOW-TECHNOLOGY

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Low-technology devices have simple operations with little or no electronic or electrical support. Low-technology devices may be found at hardware or variety stores. For example, you may use a rubber glove to open a tight-fitting jar lid. They may also include devices that are specially designed to perform a specific function, such as a jar opener.



A specially designed jar opener



A stick with a hook to help you grab or pick up things



A plastic guide to help you write checks

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## HIGH-TECHNOLOGY

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High-technology devices have complex functions and electrical or electronic support, such as a computer or other complex electronic devices. Other examples of high-tech AT devices are:

A power scooter



A computer with a communication board



A remote control with one-touch switch for controlling different electrical appliances



A personal emergency response signaling device



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## Activity 1 – Classification of technology

Instructions: Write low technology or high technology in the provided box below each picture.



## Activity 2 – List of daily tasks

Instructions: Make a list of what you do from the time you wake up until you are ready for the day.

| Time | Activities |
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|      |            |
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### **Activity 3 – Help Needed for Activities of Daily Living**

**Instruction:** Make a list of daily living activities that your family member is unable to do by him or herself.

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| 6. |
| 7. |
| 8. |

#### **EXAMPLES OF 'AT' IN DAILY LIVING ACTIVITIES**

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##### **Eating**

Super grip bendable weighted utensils are good for people who have a weak grasp and can't fully bend or turn their wrist to get the spoon to their mouth. Eating utensils with large plastic

handles are helpful for individuals with a weak grasp or when grasping is painful.

A scooper bowl, food guard, cup with two handles, flow lid and cutout cup are some examples of the many kinds of eating and drinking aids



Light weight  
utensils with  
plastic handles



Super grip  
bendable  
weighted  
utensils



A scooper bowl,  
food guard



Weighted cup



Flow lid



Cutout cup



Two handled  
mug

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## TOILETING AND BATHING

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There are devices that will allow individuals to take care of their personal bathroom needs. There are various pieces of equipment that provide support for getting up and down to use the toilet, to get in and out of the bathtub or shower, and to clean themselves.



Long-handled  
bath sponge



Hand held  
showers



Push button soap  
dispensers



Toilet frame



Toilet seat with  
armrests

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## DRESSING

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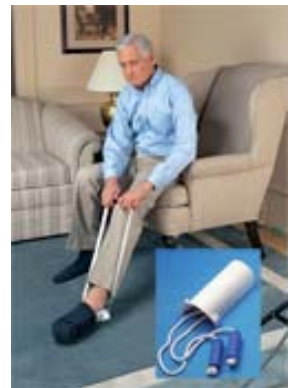
that help an individual put on or take off clothing can be simple but require some planning. Clothing with large neck openings are easy to slip on and off. Pants that have elastic waists are handy. Buttons or zippers can be replaced with Velcro®. Devices such as a dressing stick or sock and shoe aids can be obtained through a medical supply store or catalog.



Velcro closure



A dressing stick



Putting on a sock

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## EXAMPLES OF HIGH TECHNOLOGY

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- Medication reminders and pill dispensers
- Personal emergency response systems (PERS)

**Medications:** Remembering to give medications, or reminding your family member to take medications, is an important task in caregiving. There are devices that can remind the caregiver or the individual it is time to take the medication. One solution may be a medication dispenser device with electronic alarm. In

addition, there are response centers which can be hired to call and remind an individual to take medications.

**Personal Emergency Response Systems:** Sometimes a person can be alone for part of the day, you are concerned about what would happen if there is an emergency. Personal emergency response systems (PERS) provide ongoing access to a signal response center that is staffed 24-hours per day, seven days a week by trained professionals responsible for getting help to a person in case of emergency. PERS enables individuals who live in their own homes to call for assistance in an emergency. PERS includes an electronic signaling device in the person's home and the 24-hour response center service. A signaling device may be attached to the person to go off automatically if, for example, the person falls or becomes unconscious. The response center then executes one or more actions to give assistance that have been agreed upon by you and your family member.

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## SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT OBTAINING AT DEVICES

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- Talk to others with similar concerns
- AT demonstration centers
- Internet Search (see Resources and Tips at the end of this booklet)
- Access Utah Network 1-800-333-8824 or visit [www.accessut.org](http://www.accessut.org)

For some tasks on your list you can figure out an AT device on your own. Examples would be: electric toothbrush, handheld shower, non-spill mugs. You can find these items at a variety store or superstore. Another option is to go to a hardware store and ask the hardware attendant how to solve a specific problem.

There are eleven AT demonstration centers located in Utah. These centers have various kinds of devices and equipment for viewing and trying out. A list of these demonstration centers is on pages 18-19 of this booklet. AT demonstration centers will have catalogs and will know of vendors that sell AT devices.



Access Utah Network is a toll-free information and referral service for many types of disability-related information. Access Utah Network maintains a listing of used assistive technology equipment ([www.accessut.org](http://www.accessut.org)). Individuals who no longer need items list them for sale or donation, and prospective buyers can browse the list on the website. Items are priced by the individual owner. Access Utah Network connects interested sellers with interested buyers and is not involved in the exchange. If you don't have access to the Internet, you may call Access Utah Network toll free at 1-800-333-8824.

For Internet search tips see the page “Tips on finding AT through the Internet” on the last page of this participant booklet.

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## SUGGESTIONS OF RETAIL VENDORS OF AT

- Medical supply vendors/catalogs
- Local hardware or variety stores
- Large “big box” stores (such as WalMart)
- Electronic stores (such as Radio Shack)

Some AT devices can be bought “off the shelf” at medical supply stores or catalogs. Items such as reachers, grabbers, bath seats or walkers may be found at medical supply stores. For the “do it yourself types” a hardware store will have items such as bars for installation near bathtubs and toilets or adapted lever door handles. Variety stores will have items such as rubber anti-skid mats, adapted pencil grips, box openers or a magnifying glass with a light. There are various retail outlets that sell AT devices. Electronic stores such as Radio Shack will have pill boxes with alarm clocks, universal remote controls, switches and other environmental control devices.

A listing of popular AT devices with suggested vendors and price ranges is in this booklet on page 18.

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## GETTING PROFESSIONAL HELP IN CHOOSING AT

- AT Specialist
- Occupational Therapist
- Rehabilitation Engineer
- Physician
- Hospital education center staff
- Senior center or Area Agency on Aging staff

### **Assistive Technology (AT) specialist**

An Assistive Technology (AT) specialist has special training to help a person with disability figure out what type of AT device might be effective. Assistive Technology Specialists are available at most of the eleven AT demonstration centers in Utah. You can make an appointment with an AT specialist to discuss the type of device or system that might be useful for your family member. The AT specialist can recommend solutions that have worked for individuals with similar issues or functional needs.

### **Occupational therapist**

An occupational therapist (OT) is a licensed health professional that is trained to offer solutions to daily living activities for people with limited functioning due to illness or disability. Occupational therapists understand human physiology and movement. They are skilled in helping people learn to perform

essential tasks. Their training helps people prevent injury and promote healthy functioning.

### **Rehabilitation engineer**

A rehabilitation engineer, more highly trained than an AT Specialist, uses science and engineering principles to meet the needs and address barriers confronted by individuals with disabilities. A rehabilitation engineer is trained in building and customizing devices for individuals and their particular environment. Examples of rehabilitation engineering projects are: building a laser head-pointer, customizing a wheelchair seat and building a remote control one-touch switch for operating electrical appliances.

### **Physician**

A physician may be needed to prescribe an AT device such as a wheelchair, scooter or other “durable medical equipment.” A person’s health insurance plan may pay for an AT device if a physician writes a justification for why it is “medically necessary.” Medicaid, Medicare and private health insurance are possible funding sources for durable medical equipment that is medically necessary, if the person is eligible for these health plans.

## Other

Hospital education centers may provide information about obtaining AT. Your local Area Agency on Aging is another helpful resource with staff that are knowledgeable about AT.

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## AT SERVICES

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- Finding the right device
- Learning how to use the device
- Making adjustments
- Repair and maintenance

With some AT you will need help in learning how to use it. Or certain devices may need to be customized or adjusted to your specifications for maximum usefulness. Some kinds of AT devices require ongoing service for the device to function.

The first place to ask for AT services is the vendor that sells the item, for example, the wheelchair or equipment vendor. Be careful when purchasing a complex piece of equipment that you can get service support from the vendor. Buy from a vendor that has a good reputation. AT specialists at your local AT Demonstration Centers may be able to recommend reliable vendors. Also, AT specialists may be able to help with training or customizing devices, or recommend where you can get help.



Some examples of AT services include: Assisting a consumer to evaluate communication devices, installing environmental controls in a home, and training in learning to use AT software.

Look at the list of AT resources in the back of this booklet for local demonstrations centers and vendors.

## FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR BUYING AT

- Service agencies
- Independent Living Centers
- Utah Assistive Technology Foundation/Zion's Bank (loans)

You may be worried about your ability to afford the cost of AT devices and services. There are sources of financial support to obtain AT depending on your needs and financial situation.

### **Service agencies**

The Resource section of this booklet has a list of service agencies that may provide AT devices and services for eligible clients. Each agency makes a determination of who is eligible to receive financial support for AT from their agency.

### **Independent Living Centers**

A good place to start to look for financial help is an Independent Living (IL) center. Call the IL center closest to you and tell them you need information about assistive technology. The phone numbers are listed in the Resource section at the end of this booklet. Talk to the AT representative and describe what your family member needs, for example, "I have a 72 year old father who needs a wheelchair." The IL center representative will assess your situation and send you an application package to apply for funds, or refer you to an appropriate agency for help

with AT funding. If needed they will help you search for funds that could be used to purchase AT for your family member.

### **Loans**

Loans to purchase AT are available from Zions Bank, through the Utah Assistive Technology Foundation. Zions Bank offers low-interest loans to residents of Utah who qualify. This arrangement permits purchasers to obtain more expensive AT devices, such as van lifts or scooters, on time-payments without having to pay expensive interest on a loan. The loans are structured so you can make monthly payments to Zions Bank. The loan interest is paid by the Utah Assistive Technology Foundation, a non-profit charitable group. This arrangement allows a person who could not afford to buy a piece of assistive technology to be able to purchase an AT device.

## **CONCLUSION**

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Assistive technology provides useful tools to help your family member be more independent with daily living activities. Besides giving them more dignity, it may allow you extra time off from caregiving that you can use for yourself or others.

## Resources

### Popular AT devices and Price Ranges

| Product  | Where to Purchase       | Price   |
|--|-------------------------|---------|
| rubber grip  | Wal-mart                | \$4-7   |
| light weight utensils with plastic handles           | *Sammons Preston Rolyan | \$7-10  |
| food guards  | *Sammons Preston Rolyan | \$8-10  |
| sock and shoe aids (folding aid)                     | *Sammons Preston Rolyan | \$10-13 |
| Switches   | **TASH                  | \$40    |
| environmental control units (Ultra 4S - Transmitter) | **TASH                  | \$55    |
| grabbers/reachers (Handi-Reacher)                    | *Sammons Preston Rolyan | \$17-20 |
| telephone amplifier                                  | Radio Shack             | \$8-12  |
| box opener   | *Sammons Preston Rolyan | \$10-12 |
| magnifying glass w/ light                            | Office Max              | \$7-10  |
| super grip, bendable weighted utensils               | *Sammons Preston Rolyan | \$7-10  |
| scooper bowls  | *Sammons Preston Rolyan | \$10-15 |
| rubber glove   | Wal-mart                | \$5     |
| two handled mugs                                     | *Sammons Preston Rolyan | \$7-10  |
| flow lids  | *Sammons Preston Rolyan | \$7-10  |
| weighted cups  | *Sammons Preston Rolyan | \$7-10  |
| cutout cups  | *Sammons Preston Rolyan | \$7-10  |
| toilet frames  | Wal-mart                | \$40-50 |
| toilet seats w/ armrests                             | Wal-mart                | \$50    |
| long-handled bath sponge                             | Wal-mart                | \$20-22 |
| hand held showers                                    | *Sammons Preston Rolyan | \$25    |
| push button soap dispenser                           | ***Organize.com         | \$25-30 |
| dressing stick                                       | *Sammons Preston Rolyan | \$10    |
| velcro closures                                      | Wal-mart                | \$5-10  |
| medication reminders                                 | *Sammons Preston Rolyan | \$5-15  |
| Personal Emergency Response Systems (PERS)           | *Sammons Preston Rolyan | \$30-35 |
| electric toothbrush                                  | Wal-mart                | \$30-35 |
| laser head-pointer                                   | Radio Shack/Office Max  | \$35-40 |
| Bars   | Wal-mart                | \$15-18 |
| bath seat  | Wal-mart                | \$40-45 |
| adapted lever door handles                           | *Sammons Preston Rolyan | \$15-20 |
| sit & turn disks                                     | *Sammons Preston Rolyan | \$30    |
| adapted pencil grips                                 | Wal-mart                | \$5-10  |
| telephone holder                                     | *Sammons Preston Rolyan | \$10    |

\*Sammons Preston Rolyan 1-800-323-5547 or [www.sammonspreston.com](http://www.sammonspreston.com)

\*\*TASH 1-800-463-5685 [www.tashinc.com](http://www.tashinc.com)

\*\*\*Organize.com 1-800-600-9817 [www.org-etc.com](http://www.org-etc.com)

## Assistive Technology Demonstration Centers in Utah

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The UATP Assistive Technology Laboratory The AT Lab is an open lab where individuals can try out various software and hardware devices in a state-of-the-art computer lab, or get help in designing, fabricating, modifying or repairing AT equipment that enables a person to be more independent. The AT Lab is located on the Utah State University campus, in the Janet Quinney Lawson building. For more information call 435-797-0699.

### Utah Center for Assistive Technology (UCAT)

UCAT is a service hub for assistive technology assessment, evaluation, training and device demonstrations. It is also home to the Computer Center for Citizens with Disabilities. UCAT strives to enhance human potential through facilitating the application of assistive technologies for persons with disabilities.

UCAT is located at 1595 W. 500 S., Salt Lake City. For more information call toll free 1-888-866-5550.

### Division of Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DSBVI)

The Division helps Utahns statewide who are blind or visually impaired to increase their independence and become successfully employed in the community. The assistive technology device demonstration center provides opportunities to use, try out and compare a variety of vision-related AT devices.

DSBVI is located at 250 N. 1950 W., Salt Lake City. For more information call toll free 1-800-284-1823.

### Utah Services to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Utah Services provides assistance to individuals seeking information regarding assistive technology for community, education and employment activities. The AT demonstration, training and evaluation center provides opportunities to use, try out and compare a variety of hearing-related AT devices. Utah Services to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing is located at the Sanderson Center 5709 S. 1500 W., Taylorsville. For more information call 1-800-860-4860.

### Centers for Independent Living (CIL)

CILs outside the Salt Lake City area comprise the rural AT demonstration network for Utah. Each employs an assistive technology coordinator who is responsible for AT assessment, evaluation, training, and device demonstration for individuals with disabilities of all ages. For more information contact the CIL nearest you.

## Independent Living Centers

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### Northern Utah (Box Elder, Cache and Rich Counties)

OPTIONS for Independence  
1095 N. Main Street  
Logan, UT  
435-753-5353 (voice and TTY)

### Northern Wasatch Front (Davis, Morgan and Weber Counties)

Tri County Independent Living Center  
2726 Washington Blvd (in rear)  
Ogden, UT  
801-612-3215 (voice and TTY)  
1-866-734-5678 (toll free)

### Wasatch Front (Salt Lake, Summit and Tooele Counties)

Utah Independent Living Center  
3445 South Main Street  
Salt Lake City, UT  
801-466-5565 (voice)  
801-466-9910 (TTY)  
1-800-355-2195 (toll free)

### Central Utah (Utah, Wasatch, Juab and Sanpete Counties)

Central Utah Center for Independent Living  
491 N. Freedom Blvd.  
Provo, UT  
801-373-5044 (voice and TTY)  
1-877-421-4500 (toll free)

### Eastern Utah (Carbon, Daggett, Duchesne, Emery, Grand, San Juan and Uintah Counties)

Active ReEntry  
10 South Fairgrounds Road  
Price, UT  
435-637-4950 (voice and TTY)

### Southern Utah (Beaver, Garfield, Iron, Kane, Millard, Piute, Sevier, Washington and Wayne Counties)

Red Rock Center for Independence  
515 West 300 North Suite A  
St. George, UT  
435-673-7501 (voice and TTY)  
1-800-649-2340 (toll free)

## Service Agencies

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Division of Aging & Adult Services  
Utah Department of Human Services  
120 No. 200 West  
SLC, UT 84103  
Main Number. 801-538-3910

Arc of Utah  
455 East 400 South, Ste. 202  
SLC, UT 84111  
801-364-5060  
1-800-371-5060

Assist Inc.  
218 E. 500 So.  
Salt Lake City, UT 84111  
801-355-7085

Champus  
1-800-225-4816

Child Health Evaluation and Care  
Julie Olsen  
801-539-6303

Children's Special Health Care Needs  
44 North Medical Drive  
P.O. Box #14472  
Salt Lake City, UT 84114-4720  
801-584-8284

Division of Services for People with Disabilities (DSPD)  
120 North 200 West Room #201  
Salt Lake City, UT 84103  
801-538-4200

Foundation for the Advancement of the Blind  
4058 Moore Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90066  
310-301-0344

Hearing, Speech & Vision Services  
44 Medical Drive  
Salt Lake City, UT 84113  
801-584-8215

Medicaid

801-538-6155 or 1-800-662-9651

Medicare

(Equipment) 1-800-899-7095

(Enrollment) 1-800-772-1213

Multiple Sclerosis Society

525 S. 300 West

SLC, UT 84101

801-575-8500

Muscular Dystrophy Association

4568 S. Highland Drive #290

Salt Lake City, UT 84117

801-278-6200

Private Insurance

Varies from policy to policy.

Contact insurance agency or benefits coordinator.

United Cerebral Palsy

1018 W. Atherton Dr.

Murray, UT 84123

801-266-1805

Utah Assistive Technology Foundation

3064 East 3835 South

Salt Lake City, Utah 84109-3608

801-273-7239

Utah Housing Authority

Varies from county to county

for general information call

Sheri Brinkerhoff at:

801-538-8713

Veteran's Administration

801-524-5960 or 1-800-827-1000

Vocational Rehabilitation

State Office of Rehabilitation

801-538-7530 or 1-800-473-7530

## Tips on finding AT through the Internet



1. Open your internet browser
2. Type [www.google.com](http://www.google.com)
3. In search box, type “assistive technology vendor” or “assistive device vendor”
4. It will bring all website which sell assistive devices

Sammons Preston [www.sammonspreston.com](http://www.sammonspreston.com) is one of the biggest assistive device vendors. You can just type web address into the web browser.